10: d'Orleans--265-266 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 346, 531, 712

[LSS: at Muong Ngoi] "On the summit of a hillock that overlooks the valley stands a polygonal embankment formed of red [266] earth in which some openings have been made, a wall in the centre surrounds a block of masonry seven or eight yards in diameter which supports a dome of white plaster, with gilt ornaments. Above it, there is a cone made of seven gilded circles, surmounted by a point, the whole edifice may be about fifteen feet high, and I remark some small reliquaries containing rough statuettes, of which the faces are half obliterated. The natives, whom I question, tell me that it is a fort, and in truth, a few cannons in that position, could easily command both sides of the valley, but at present they are missing. However, in my opinion, the monument is of religious origin; it reminds me of similar edifices in Thibet; but I cannot obtain any information either upon the date or the object of its construction."

10: d'Orleans--287-288 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 531, 778

"While our men rest, we are carried to the right bank of the stream, where there is a grotto in the middle of a calcareous cliff; in front of the opening there is a kind of balustrade cut in the stone, and a staircase leads to the celebrated sanctuary of Pakou, already described by Garnier; here only one room is found, and that is not very deep, but it is filled with religious objects similar to those at Nam Ou; and we have the same experiences as upon that day, for we can hardly step in the midst of this field of gods for fear of crushing some of them with every movement. I notice several banners, some floating and others rolled up, most of them represent two divinities standing upon lotus flowers; there is a small gilt chest in the form of a tabernacle; and, higher up, a bell in gilt plaster, a form derived from the lotus bud; on the sides of the room are white dragons with goggle eyes, showing their teeth. They are of Chinese design, a man (all are in plaster) [288] with his hands on his hips, is on horseback upon a pedestal, he also has tusks, round eyes and extraordinarily large ears; and on the ground, in the midst of fragments of innumerable prayers written in Laotian upon palm leaves, lie innumerable statues, some of them wearing chasubles; a few gods are riding upon elephants; while chariots are also represented by small wooden vehicles placed upon four wheels, and ornamented with pieces that overhang them like rostra. A series of small divinities are carved, each in separate medallions, upon painted panels of wood fastened in pairs."

10: d'Orleans--321 [3] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 288, 531, 548

"The scarves which are celebrated in Indo-China, embroidered by hand with a great variety of design, and in very harmonious colours, denote great taste. After the saleswomen have folded their goods and packed them up to take away, some of them lag behind and tell us that they are themselves for sale at twenty-five or thirty rupees."

10: d'Orleans--353 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 411, 531, 644

"Men of the king's household bear swords, the sheath of which is of chased gold, while the handle is of horn studded with precious stones. These swords are over 200 years old, and very fine, but the blade is common. Others carry lances with wooden shafts and silver bands at the top, the iron of the lance being encased in a red sheath. I also notice a javelin, the iron of which is crescent shaped with a notch at the lower end."

23: Franck--328-329 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians-1-2
116, 531, 304

"While prince, sergeant, and I looked in vain for the rushing stream to cast up the canteen, the coolies went bathing. They were all of the 'black paunch' tribe, as distinguished from the 'white paunch,' or untattooed ones, though it is not really the paunch that is decorated. The man of this branch of the Laosian or Tai race is never without his pants, even when he is stark naked. Nearly all of them are solidly tattooed in blue--invisible alas to the ordinary camera--from the waist to the knees, a wide tattooed belt with lacy ends about the floating ribs and a lacy effect like ruffles just below the bend of the knees. The design of this hip and thigh covering is always 'lions' within squares with rounded corners, all touching one another, either as a protection against or to give the wearer the bravery of the lion. With the figures are mingled sacred texts, said to be Pali in Laosian or Siamese script. The priests especially are covered with these sacred writings, it is said, but one can never really know what is under the yellow robe. Women seldom if ever wear these tattooed substitutes for the Scotchman's kilt, say [329] those who should know, perhaps because they are in no danger from evil spirits, or cannot be saved anyway. Some of the men also had red tattooing on the upper part of the body, red squares on the chest, all sorts of things on the back, though none of them obscene nor as crude as the tattooing on some of our sailors. One of my men was overrun with red lizards; some were whole picture-books or comic supplements or intricate

signs of the zodiac. There was one fellow whose whole back was covered with a lesson in arithmetic or geometry, even trigonometry for all I know, as if a small brother or a schoolmaster had used him as a slate. Others had only one leg tattooed, generally the left, or both of them only on the buttocks, or simply the fronts of the thighs, or merely spots here and there, all according to personal caprice , taste, swank, or an attack of cowardliness before the job was finished. Unlike most tribal decorations of the sort this tattooing may be put on at any age, whenever courage is ripe."

25: Brodrick--105-106 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians-1-2
116, 346, 531

"The that, or Laotian stupa, is as imposing in size as the vat, or temple. Sometimes, but rarely, the that is just a dome, like the stupas of Ceylon, then, again, it may be bell-shaped as in Siam and Burma, but the peculiar Laotian form is bulbous and elongated into a sort of spire which, however, shows a peculiar section, ridged at four corners and bulbous between them. This shifting outline lends a pleasingly impermanent air to the pinnacles jutting up above the feathery fronds of the garden-city. So, despite botching in the Siamese taste, and manifest foreign influence, the Luang-Prabang pagodas with those of the Tran-ninh province, have retained much of their archaic character. But although there may be buildings in ancient style there are no very ancient monuments. The oldest still in use cannot date farther back than 1500.

The plan of the viharas, or temples, is similar to that of the Cambodian. The familiar fig-tree spreads its glistening leaves over the sacred enclosure. But the architecture is quite different. Gone are the twisting, twining eaves, the fragile, delicate fretwork of the modern Khmers. Here the temples are rectangular and white-washed-over brick. The roofs are high and deep and drop far down, giving the whole structure a queerly Oceanian or South Seas appearance. Within, the walls are richly frescoed with floral arabesques and geometrical designs on a red background. The doors and shutters are adorned with presentments of giants, garudas, polycephalous serpents and the phantasies of Indian legend. A rich, and often lavish, display of

enamelled lead-work, gilded stucco and panelling inlaid with chips of looking-glass, does not detract from a general appearance of elegance and strangeness, due not a little to the curious Laotian convention of battened openings. Windows and doors all have sides converging from base to top and even the pillars and columns taper. Here must be some lasting tradition of wooden-hut architecture still preserved intact by more primitive peoples of Indo-China and Indonesia.

It seems that in the olden days, when the Laos lands were rich [106] in gold, the temples were sheathed in gold sheets so that the sanctuaries seemed precious reliquaries.

And, within, at the far end, in the half-gloom you will see a great image of the Buddha, often of lacquered and gilded brick, an image quite different from the representations of the Blessed One in any land or at any time for the last two thousand years. The narrow long face, the jutting aquiline nose, reminding you sometimes of the curves you see on masks from the Sepik region of New Guinea, the daemonic expression, the short head (the Laotians themselves are predominantly short-headed), the visage all features and expression and almost no face. You are a long way from any other interpretation of the Hellenistic inspired Buddha image. Here, in the Laos, you have a South Seas Buddha, a Buddha assured indeed but active and not contemplative."

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

acknowledge in the street a lady with whom one happens to be on particularly good terms. These things in Laos are fraught with an etiquette which is the legacy of a highly organized society not too far gone in decay.

The charm of Vientiane lies in the life and the customs of the people. Unless one is an amateur of pagoda architecture there is little else to be seen. The Laotians have preferred to work in wood, rather than stone, and their art, confined chiefly to the decoration by religious artists of the doors, pillars and interiors of pagodas, quickly perishes in such a climate.

Outside the town there is a great, grey, half-decayed *stupa*, built as a tomb for a hair of the Buddha. It is surrounded by a cloister, containing perhaps a thousand Buddha images; a collection of which the people of Vientiane are very proud. But even here, where the religion is practised in its purest form, there is a little degeneration, a little backsliding from the lofty philosophic conception; and the taint of magic practices shows itself. Selecting one of the numerous images as a personal tutelary divinity, the devotee subjects it to a kind of bribery similar to that sometimes practised in Southern Europe with images of the saints. In this case the image's chief function is healing, and when the sufferer recovers from any complaint he hastens to the pagoda to apply gold-leaf to the part of the Buddha corresponding to that where he has felt the pain in his own body. I was interested to deduce from this practice that the people of Vientiane are much plagued by headaches – perhaps those which accompany malaria.

Standing in a corner of the sanctuary was an ancient ithyphallic statue, an old Hindu divinity, no doubt, which had been worn smooth in the appropriate parts by the feminine adoration of a thousand years. I was told that the women of the French colony who wish for a child frequently emulate their husbands' pose of Laos-ization by coming here secretly to pay their respects. I wondered whether this clandestine tribute might not be extended

115: Le Boulanger--81 H-4 (no date) 1931 AM1 Indochina
(1300-1700) Laotians AM8

"The wooden panels which formed the walls, the corbels, and 341
the beams were all carved with great delicacy. This pagoda was 346
as pretty in the fineness of its details as it was elegant in its gen- 172
eral lines.

"But nothing is left of it" (1).

1. Cf. G. Maspero, L'Indochine /Un empire colonial francais: l'Indochine. Paris, 1929-1930/, p. 186.

Sculpture. For these sanctuaries, the Laotians made hordes of 532
statues out of stone, brick, and especially bronze, which were 175*
wholly or partly covered with gold. Of the latter, which were always molded from wax models, some attained gigantic size. /127/ All of them strike the various attitudes of the Buddhist liturgy. The bodies are sketchily draped and may be seated, standing, walking or lying down, their arms outspread. The faces are surmounted by a sort of tiara and are frozen in a hieratic smile which is not very expressive and seldom varies.

Painting. As for the fresco paintings which brighten the walls of certain pagodas, they are not of any special interest. Most of /177/ them were "primarily the work of Burmese, Cambodians or Chinese of whom the native artists (were only) the pupils" (1).

1. Cf. L. de Reinach, op. cit. /Le Laos, posthumous edition, Paris, 1911/, p. 342.

The art of the gold and silver smith. On the other hand, the 326
Laotian jewelers and silversmiths knew and still know, with only the most meager of tools, how to work gold and silver admirably--primarily silver--and how to chase and engrave it. Their motifs show an attractive decorative invention, and it is chiefly in this "minor art" which borders on small-scale industry that we find the most original manifestations of old-time Laotian life /128/ -- betel services, vases, cups, sword and dagger hilts; bracelets, necklaces, rings, headpins, earrings, etc.

Basketwork and weaving. Finally, "like all the peoples of the 285
Far East, the Laotians are skilled in all kinds of basketwork. A 531
very pretty object which seems to be peculiar to this land is the small basket for women in which the basketwork is covered with

304 produced with an implement bearing several fine points which are dipped in India ink or diluted cinnabar. Depending on the coloring matter used, the tattoos are dark blue or brick red in color. The tattoo artists give their taste and fancy free rein and produce the most varied designs which, for example, represent intertwined snakes, dragons, lions, tigers and imaginary animals. Oftentimes there is only one overall color which makes the tattooed person look like a man wearing a close-fitting blue bathing suit.

304 885 The practice of tattooing is a very old one and its origin is lost in [186] dark antiquity. It is at once a kind of coquetry and a proof of courage because of the suffering which the operation causes and the dangers it involves in a land where antisepsis is unknown to the natives and where the tools used are as dirty as the operators. [Illustration here]

In some localities a man who is not tattooed is regarded as lacking in virility, and as a sign of his inferiority he may not bathe upstream from women.

562 304 Laotian women are not tattooed. This custom is practiced only by the Youn and Kha women, where tattoos are usually limited to lines, stars or reptiles on the hands, imitations of rings on the fingers, etc.

301 [187] Personal adornment. In all seasons both men and women wear flowers on their ears or in a string around their coil of hair. This gracious custom, which flatters both the eye and the sense of smell, must be extremely ancient in origin. It is to be found in many parts of the globe which have no relation to Laos, and particularly in Polynesia. [Illustration here]

346 531 Pagodas. Laotian pagodas are as numerous as they are varied in respect to type of construction, architecture, dimensions and ornamentation. In sparsely populated villages and poor muongs the pagodas are built like the houses, either of wood, thatch or bamboo lattice, although with greater care and a few slight additional decorations. Elsewhere, in the larger centers, the pagodas are built of brick, roofed with tile, enhanced by many-colored and gilded ornaments of carved wood and embellished with pseudo-sculptured motifs made of staff. On the inside, the walls are covered with brightly colored frescoes [188] which often picture, against a gold background, religious or warlike scenes taken from the Ramayâna and other more realistic ones which often borde[illegible]bscenity.

149: Reinach--148a G-3 (no date)1901 AMl Indochina
Laotians AM8

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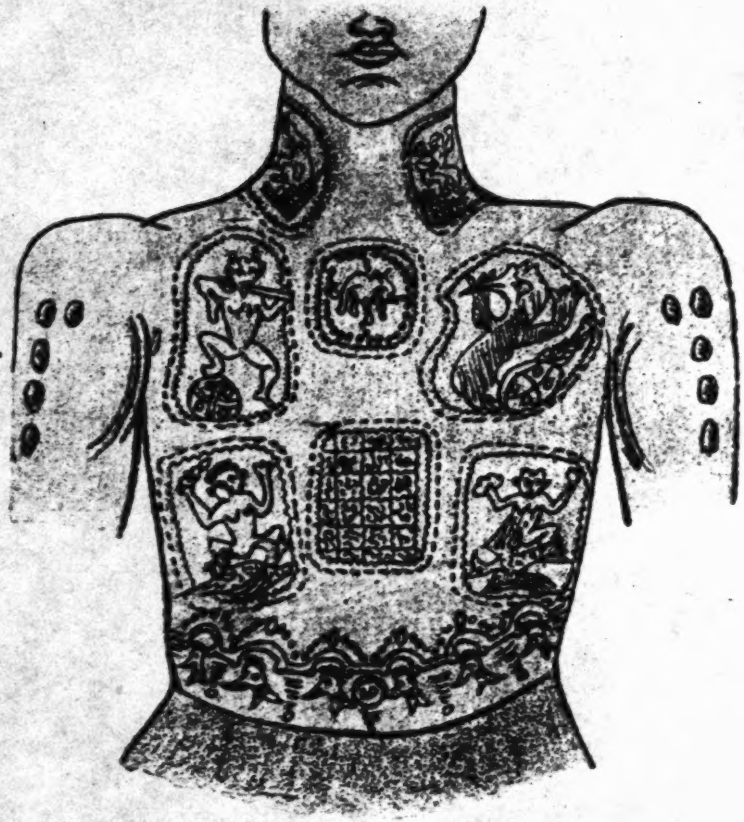

Fig. 48 /p. 186/ Chest tattoos of a Burmese or Lu man (blue and red in color).

149: Reinach--140b G-3 (no date)1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

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Fig. 49 /p.187/ a, a', a" -- Tattoos of Youn women;
b -- Tattoos on the hands of Kha women (blue in color);
c, c' -- Tattoos of slaves.

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colors are bright and harmonious. It is during these days of rejoicing that the first amorous intrigues often spring up between young people which, generally speaking, end in marriage.

Preparations for the funeral celebration went on, and dusk had not yet fallen when music and singing began to be heard and plates of food were passed around, as well as jars full of rice brandy.

Immediately after the death, men went to the forest to select the dead, but not decaying, tree whose trunk was to serve for making the coffin. Others prepared the pedestal on which it was to be placed and the roof which would surmount it.

The coffin was finally finished. Trapezoidal in shape, with the base uppermost, it rested on a wooden pedestal decorated with carvings. The roof placed above it was copied from the roofs of pagodas. The frame was made of bamboo lattice covered with glued calico, and the whole was ornamented with gold paper cutouts, streamers and multicolored cotton floss.

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[205] The body was sealed in its coffin, where it rested on a bed of aromatic branches and leaves. It was fully dressed and surrounded by bedclothes. A sliding cover was dovetailed into place, and all joints sealed with an indestructible caulking compound made from lime, clay, albumen and paddy husks. [Illustration alongside text here]

The catafalque stood in the middle of the room, one of the walls of which had been removed, as we have seen. It was surrounded by flowers, green branches, lighted candles and stick incense perfumed with powdered benzoin.

In the course of the next four days the province bonzes and officials arrived, and all recited the ritual prayers in Pali around the catafalque without understanding anything of what they said but scrupulously observing the consecrated rhythm and intonation.

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In the meantime a funeral pyre had been built on the sandy bank of the Mékong, left bare by the low waters, using about three [206] steres of dry wood which had been impregnated with resin, wood oil and kerosene.

Solidly held in place at the side by six heavy stakes of green wood, the pyre was surmounted by a high canopy or rectangular pavilion, the roof of which rose in tiers and was covered with flowered cotton cloth and decorated with gold paper garlands, cutouts and many-colored streamers.

This pavilion, supported by four posts decorated in the same taste, would presently serve to shelter the coffin.

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584 From time to time a girl will get up and leave the celebration. She is soon followed by a young man, and both disappear into the shadows, escorted for form's sake by a little boy or girl. This is the beginning of a liaison and will doubtless end in marriage, unless the young gallant is in too much of a hurry, clumsy or flighty and finds himself faced with paying one of the special fines if he compromises the girl and refuses to make up for it.

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531 Offerings to the pagodas. There are other "Ngans" which have a half profane and half religious purpose. That is to say, they are established either to thank heaven for a lucky event or to solicit its clemency. They may occur, for example, either to celebrate a return to health after a long illness, or the success of a trading season or hunting or fishing expedition, or to call down blessings from on high on a trip which is being made or planned, etc. These types of "Ngans" then involve offerings to the pagodas and to the bonzes, offerings which bear the name of "Tone-Pheung" (literally, wax cut in pieces). They are so named because of the wax imitation flowers which decorate [222] a kind of pyramid or small pagoda supporting them, called "Pha-Sate" (in French, Faithful to God).

These little edifices are built and decorated by the friends or guests with a rapidity, a taste and an elegance which would be astounding if we did not know the degree to which artistic feeling is innate in the Laotian, and if we were not aware of the prodigious skill with which he is endowed.

Built on a bamboo framework covered with pieces of banana wood, carved with festoons and ornamental moldings, and arranged in tiers of roofs, in minarets and in columns, these "Pha-Sate," which are always between one and two meters in height, seem to be made of ivory and affect an extraordinary variety of forms each of which is more graceful than the last and which seem to be inspired by the architecture of the pagodas of India, Cambodia and Burma.

It will not be in vain to note that the only purpose of these ephemeral edicules, which will keep their new look for only a short while, is merely to present the wax offering in a less banal and more artistic manner than if it had been given in the form of thick, heavy, massive blocks.

The "Pha-Sate" are mounted on stretchers which are carried by men. Besides their wax flowers, they are decorated with natural

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flowers, pompoms and multicolored cotton streamers. Thick wax candles are stuck to the uprights, into which coins, gold nuggets, gold leaf and precious stones are sunk.

The wax is destined for worship purposes and the other offerings will be used for the upkeep of pagodas or for ornamenting sacred statues. The bonzes are not forgotten, for on the platform of the "Pha-Sate," either between the uprights or in special baskets ad hoc, there are articles of clothing, bedclothes, kettles, talaps, betel accessories, etc.

The day preceding the delivery of the "Tone-Pheung" to the pagoda is spent in making all kinds of preparations--cooking food, making betel quids, cigarettes, cakes and other necessary items [223] for the morrow's celebration. In the evening there is a kind of rehearsal for the "Ngan" in which the singers and musicians practice until an extremely late hour while the mothers and married women continue to work in the presence of the young men and girls talking merrily.

On the morning of the day when the "Tone-Pheung" is to be presented to the pagoda the bonzes are invited to a copious feast which continues long after their departure among relatives, friends and neighbors. The bonzes come back in the afternoon to bless the "Tone-Pheung" and to say certain prayers. Then, towards five in the afternoon, the procession forms and five or six bearers, depending on the weight, take the stretcher supporting the offering and raise it to their shoulders. The men follow first after the procession, and then the women, and the latter carry lighted wax candles in their hands. Musicians bring up the rear, and the whole crowd moves toward the pagoda by the longest route. There the "Pha-Sate" or the "Tone-Pheung" is taken around the enclosure three times and finally put down at the entrance to the pagoda. Those present place their candles in a special holder at the foot of the great statue of Buddha, and then withdraw while the bonzes recite prayers in the presence of whoever is making the offering and his relatives.

The guests then return to the home of their host, where the celebration goes on all night and sometimes even lasts into the following day.

The bonzes remove the wax from the "Pha-Sate" and use it to make candles for worship purposes. The flowers are placed at the feet of Buddha, and the coins and precious stones are put aside.

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306 **Gold and silver smiths and jewelry-making.** In nearly all the large centers there are gold and silver smiths who are also jewelry-makers. They work either on their own behalf manufacturing articles which they then sell, or else on order for individuals who wish to transform silver coins which they have saved over the years, or native gold which they have obtained by gold-washing or purchase, into gold and silver articles or jewelry.

The Laotian silversmiths and jewelers use very few tools. A bellows, a crucible, a few pairs of tongs, some drawplates, caulking chisels, graving tools and hammers are all they need to cast, forge, braze, draw, laminate, chase, and checker gold and silver.

The different phases of the work include casting the metal either with or without alloy (1), laminating it with a hammer and drawing

(1) The alloys are tin and copper for silver, and always silver for gold.

it partly with a hammer and partly with a drawplate, embossing it, chasing it, checkering it, brazing on filigree or globular ornaments, and giving a patina to and burnishing the finished product.

The patina is obtained on silver by dipping it in lemon juice and tempering it while hot in a strong alum solution.

Gold jewelry is usually covered with a reddish patina which has a very warm color. This is obtained by tempering it in boiling water containing, by weight:

2 parts of saltpeter.
3 parts of salt.
1 part of alum.
Sufficient quantities of sulphur.

[53] [456] All the artists work from uniform models. The decorative motifs are taken from Brahminic tradition, with a few modifications arising out of the introduction of certain elements which are derived from Chinese art.

Yet the Laotians are capable of producing work which is not based on their usual models. Thus a great many jeweler-goldsmiths can reproduce designs which are different in shape, appearance and style from the common types which are handed down from father to son or from master to pupil.

The usual gold and silver articles include betel services, vases, cups, boxes, knife handles and sword hilts. Generally these objects are made of silver, but sometimes also of gold. The jewelry includes

degree.

389 Paper. The manufacture of paper using the bark of a tree called "Kok-Sa" (1) is limited to a single region of northern Laos.

(1) See Chapter VII.

It is not of any great importance, since it does not even suffice for local consumption.

The manufacturing processes are those familiar to everyone as being used in China, in Japan, in Annamite lands and in Burma.

321 531 Wood and ivory carving. Here we no longer have to deal with an industry, but with an art. The men who practice it are few in number, are highly paid, work slowly and are generally inveterate opium smokers.

Like the goldsmiths and jewelers, the wood and ivory carvers of Laos reproduce, ad infinitum, immutable models which their predecessors have handed down. They are, however, able to execute motifs from any given design. To be sure, they are inferior to their Burmese, Annamite, Malay, Chinese and especially Japanese colleagues as regards the movement, harmony, purity of form and finish of their work.

532 Fresco painting. The pagodas of Laos, which have been left untended for many long years, contain curious fresco paintings set off with gold, but lack of care and exposure to the weather have partly destroyed them. This art has very few practitioners in Laos, and it should be added that most of the existing frescoes are mainly the work of Burmese, Cambodians and Chinese of whom the native artists are only the pupils.

396 [438] Pirogue carpenters. Nearly all the inhabitants who [464] live on the banks of the big river or its principal tributaries are able to carve out a pirogue. Certain villages, however, have a monopoly in this industry.

When it is a matter merely of hewing out a pirogue which is to be used only for crossing the river, fishing or agricultural service, everyone does a fairly good job. But for the large pirogues which are reserved for regattas, voyages and commercial transports, recourse must be had to specialists. Only they know how to give their products

536 There is no scenery. The costumes and headdresses vary according to the characters represented. The masks of colored lacquer worn by the actors, their accessories (weapons, scarves, etc.) being traditional and invariable enable the fictitious characters on the stage to be identified.

/178 The theatre of animated shadows, similar to the shadow theatre
101/ of China and Java, tends to disappear little by little.

Laotian Decoration.

Laotian decoration is characterized by a somewhat mannered
● 531 elegance which can be noticed in the motifs of the pagoda doors and
178 windows. The Laotian artisan is, however, endowed with an extremely well developed artistic sense, but the present day demands do not enable him any longer to live by his handiwork, and the importation of manufactured articles tends to make the artist disappear. /89/ He can only survive by royal patronage. The royal palace for this reason shelters sculptors on wood and ivory as well as goldsmiths, but
/644/ their produce is not sold and the tourist will hardly be able to bring back with him typical Laotian objects.

However, the weaving of silk materials of divers shades, often laminated with gold or silver, is still done on a sufficient scale to
/236/ satisfy the passing tourist.

The Sin

This is a skirt reaching from the hips to the ankles. It is of a
291 rather somber color with a design of vertical stripes very close together and not very evident. This skirt is decorated on its lower edge with a flat trimming of two or three rows of gold or silver braid. At the top of the skirt a belt of red cloth, more or less embroidered, relieves the rather dark tone. This garment is a regular cylinder having the same width on its entire length. When the woman emerges from her bath she lifts her skirt, gathered into the shape of a crown, above her head and lets it slide down the length of her body. She fixes it without hooks or fasteners to her belt by means of a turned in pleat tied in front leaving most of her belly exposed. A bright colored scarf of cotton or silk thrown over one shoulder and completely covering the breasts completes the costume. The most beautiful scarves come from Samneua, Luang Prabang and Khong. The jewelry most frequently seen consists of
301 silver bracelets, necklaces and buttons, rings, long crossed over chains /chaines-sautoirs/, flat clasps, and belts usually of silver but sometimes of gold.

/Pages 90 to 135 not translated/ /136 blank/

173: Deydier --70 H.B-3 (no date) 1952 AM1 Indochina
(ca. 1940) Laotians AM8

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Fig. XIII. Luang Prabang. Vat Visun. Door wing of the northern facade. (Cl. E.F.E.O.)

173: Deydier--71 H, B-3 (no date) 1952 AMI Indochina
(ca. 1940) Laotians AM8

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Fig. XIV. Luang Prabang. Vat Pakhe, Door-wing of the Dutch (Cl. Presse Information).